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This social studies unit provides an impressionistic study of the Civil War soldier and of his changing attitudes toward that war. It contrasts the periods of his optimism early in the war and his nostalgic recollection of events after the war with the despair he experienced from 1862 to 1865. The materials are essentially anecdotal in character and include diaries, soldiers' letters, regimental accounts, and the personal reminiscences of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee. They are intended to suggest the dichotomy between the romantic and realistic views of war and to clarify the feelings toward the war of soldiers on both sides. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (Author/JB)

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TEACHER'S MANUAL

THE CIVIL WAR SOLDIER:
ROMANTIC AND REALIST

By

Jay Caton
Gerald Garland
William White

Arvada West High School
Arvada, Colorado

This material has been produced
by the
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NOTE TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

This unit was prepared by the Committee on the Study of History, Amherst College, under contract with the United States Office of Education. It is one of a number of units prepared by the Amherst Project, and was designed to be used either in series with other units from the Project or independently, in conjunction with other materials. While the units were geared initially for college-preparatory students at the high school level, experiments with them by the Amherst Project suggest the adaptability of many of them, either wholly or in part, for a considerable range of age and ability levels, as well as in a number of different kinds of courses.

The units have been used experimentally in selected schools throughout the country, in a wide range of teaching/learning situations. The results of those experiments will be incorporated in the Final Report of the Project on Cooperative Research grant H-168, which will be distributed through ERIC.

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This unit was initially prepared in the summer of 1965.

The unit is an impressionistic study of the Civil War soldier, and of his attitudes toward that war. The materials are essentially anecdotal in character and are intended to appeal to average and slower learners. Numerous anthologies of collateral material will occur to the teacher; some are recommended at the end of the unit. Strongly recommended as well are the two long-playing records produced by Columbia Records entitled The Blue and The Gray, which capture in music and words much of the spirit and mood of the men who here write their impressions.

The introduction of the unit is intended to suggest something of the dichotomy between romantic and realistic views of war, and to establish a frame of reference for future discussions. Thereafter three questions run throughout the unit: (1) What are these men like? (2) How did they feel about the war? (3) What factors seem to have influenced their feelings? The unit is organized to let the soldier himself give evidence as he speaks in three different periods: (1) the early optimistic months of the war; (2) the long grim years from 1862 to 1865; and (3) looking back at the war.

Throughout the unit are numbers of selections which the teacher may find useful for encouraging critical reading.

The suggestions which follow are suggestions only. The teacher may wish to use the unit in some wholly different fashion and to add or subtract materials. He is encouraged to do so.

INTRODUCTION

The two documents in the introduction are intended to establish a frame of reference for the discussion of attitudes toward war which will follow throughout the unit. Students might be asked as a direct question how these two men, looking back, seemed to view the war. At first glance, of course, one appears to be taking a grimly realistic view of what had happened; the other recalls it romantically and thinks of a grand parade. Students might well be asked to contrast realism and romanticism. The contrast runs throughout the unit, and some establishment of definitions might be helpful. After the dichotomy has been established further probing of these two documents might raise the question of how easy it is to draw the line. The two documents are, of course, describing two quite different things. How valid is it, therefore, to contrast them? (Students should not be let off the hook too easily with that observation: the mere fact that one soldier recollects one kind of thing, and another something quite different, may in itself be significant.) Perhaps even more important in establishing the frame of reference for the future is the further question of whether the two documents do in fact reflect different attitudes. Does the melodramatic effect of the first as well as

its language ("He had answered hours before . . .") suggest that even he is romanticizing the war, even while talking about a different aspect of it? If the student thinks this is it to be explained by the fact that both men are looking back, and that men tend to romanticize in looking back? Finally, is it perhaps significant that both are writing in the 'nineties, a decade of high Victorianism? How much is it true that men's attitudes toward war reflect the age in which they live rather than the impact of war itself?

SECTION I

GOING TO WAR: WHAT DID IT MEAN

TO THE MEN WHO WENT?

The materials in this section deal chiefly with the early years of war, a factor which the student may or may not deem significant as he tries to analyze the attitudes of the soldiers here speaking. It was, generally speaking, a period of "innocence," and not until the end of the peninsula campaign in 1862 were men aware that the task in which they were engaged would be long and difficult. (The contrast between Hollis Wrisley's view of the war in March 1862 (#30) and his view in July (#32) is striking in this respect.

The principal questions which might be asked in dealing with the section are (1) What were these men like? (2) How did they feel about the war? and (3) What factors seem to have influenced their feelings? The first nine selections have to do for the most part with reasons for enlistment and the attitudes which took men to war in the first place--with such factors as social compulsion and pride, enthusiasm, the simple desire to make money, and belief in a cause, variously described and justified. Students might be asked to compare these factors with the factors which take men to war today as one way of beginning their attempt to characterize the Civil War soldier. Selections 10-21 reflect a number of things that men must put up with in war which may affect their attitudes fully as much as what they think about why they are fighting--things as diverse as leadership, coping with mud, rain and the need to cook, learning to work together and rumor. Selections 22 and 25 might be used for character analysis of two types of individuals. Selections 23-24 and 26-32 reflect a number of reactions (lonesomeness, boredom, humor, trepidation as battle approaches) which may also affect their attitudes, or which may be partly a result of them.

SECTION II

FIGHTING A WAR: WHAT DID IT MEAN

TO THE MEN WHO PARTICIPATED?

The materials in this section come chiefly from the period between the end of the peninsula campaign in 1862 and the close of the war. The same three questions that were asked in Section I might be asked again: (1) What were these men like? (2) How did they feel about the war? and (3) What factors seem to have influenced their feelings? Any changes in the student's response to these might be explored. This might be focused by a question as to whether the things which men must cope with have changed, and further questions as to whether their capacity to cope with them have changed as well, and what the results are in terms of attitudes. Clearly the answer to the first question is both yes and no: the hardships of camp and such personal problems as loneliness are still the same, while at the same time men are much more aware of death and the grimness of battle. (Documents 28-32, 37, 41-43, 45-48.) There is less tendency to speak in terms of the grandness of the cause, and more to speak and think philosophically about one's own relationship to events. (Documents 44, 49-50.) The discussion might move finally to the question of how much one can generalize about attitudes, harking back to the reference points discussed the first day. Does there seem to have been a tendency to romanticize the war at its beginning which has now given way to a starker kind of realism? Documents 51-57 here (men's reactions to the end of war) might be compared with Documents 1-9 in Section I.

An interesting exercise in the critical reading of historical evidence, albeit tangent to the main point of the unit, might well be the four views of Shiloh (Documents 33-36) written from different points of view and at different times. Students might be asked which is best evidence of what happened, and why.

SECTION III

PEACE: WHAT DID IT MEAN TO

THE MEN WHO RETURNED?

The final section deals with recollections of the war by soldiers looking back, and raises as a final question the question of how time affects attitudes. How does the war look to them now,

and what has influenced those feelings? Do these men seem to have been genuinely moved by their experiences in war, and if so, how? Is it fair to say that men, in looking back, tend to romanticize what they had once seen as very real, or is the romanticism merely nostalgia and not in any sense a view of war? How is the attitude affected by the time in which the man wrote (is it possible to make generalizations about the attitudes of those writing in the 1860's and 1870's, when the war was still close? about those writing in the 1890's? about those writing in the 20th century, in extreme old age?))? How good are these recollections as a guide to what the war meant to men?

EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL
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STUDENT'S MANUAL

THE CIVIL WAR SOLDIER:
ROMANTIC AND REALIST

Jay Caton
Gerald Garland
William White
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
I - GOING TO WAR: WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE MEN WHO WENT?.....	3
II - FIGHTING A WAR: WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE MEN WHO PARTICIPATED?.....	16
III - PEACE: WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE MEN WHO RETURNED?.....	34
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING.....	50

INTRODUCTION

The following two reminiscences, both written in 1898, recall the Civil War. As you read them and all the materials which follow you will want to keep in mind two questions which are central to the unit: What does war mean to the men who fight it? Specifically, what did the Civil War mean to the men who fought it?¹

The scenes of horror, of dark despair, and gradual death, in the piercing cold and darkness, can never be described. Imagination shrinks even from such a picture. The actual, bare reality as we saw it, can never be known or described, and scarcely approached. A low murmur was at all times heard about us, and along the irregular lines ambulances were rumbling; men were groaning, imploring, screaming out for assistance, as they slowly chilled and stiffened to death. Hundreds of dead and wounded lay thickly about us. No help for them as they lay in the cold, clammy mud fast freezing about them. Not for them affection's soothing hand, or the many nameless attentions of loving hands. Several nearest us were in the last agonies of death, their harsh, distressed death-rattles, sounding strangely on the midnight air. Drearily, with faint hope for the morrow; exhausted, bleeding, dying by inches, they must lie, their heroic efforts wasted in a useless sacrifice. . . . Our bivouac was among the dead of the Twelfth Rhode Island (Nagle's Brigade). The first sergeant, Charles F. Knowles (afterward killed at Gettysburg), went about distributing cartridges for a renewal of the fight. Those most sleepy, he moved with his foot, and a "get up for your cartridges." His foot came against one obstinate fellow, who seemed deaf to his command. He was completely covered up with a blanket, and in the midst of our company. "Get up!" he did not stir. A repetition of the foot movement, and still no motion.

Cold and shivering, the sergeant stooped, a little out of patience, pulled off the blanket, and at great risk, struck a match and held to his face. The glassy eyes, fixed and stony in death, the rigid, ashy face, told him the truth. He had attempted to issue cartridges to the dead, and compel him to answer to the roll-call.

¹ Robert Goldthwaite Carter, "Four Brothers in Blue," The Maine Bugle, July, October, 1898, 238, 367.

He had answered hours before, his duty to his country in the ranks of the army was done!

* * * *

As the president rode along the lines, the flags were dipped, the bands played "Hail to the Chief," and the bugle and drum corps "sounded off." The corps were then reviewed separately, the men in the meantime stamping their feet, and thrashing their hands to keep warm. The batteries passed first, then the infantry in column of divisions. It was a beautiful sight, this military pageant of over a hundred thousand veteran soldiers passing by in a steady stream. Hours went by. The sunlight and shadow chased each other over the plain. In the distance were the camps, mile upon mile of log huts, the spires of Fredericksburg, the batteries beyond and the shining river.

When the light caught upon the bayonet tips, and flashed over flags and numerous equipments, as regiment after regiment, and brigade after brigade, swept by in endless procession, one could hardly refrain from dwelling with wondering eye, upon such a beautiful fairy-like scene. The uniforms were clean, rifles bright, and everything indicated the pride which that perfectly organized army felt in presenting to the president, . . . only the best side of the thoroughly disciplined soldier.

The drums and bands kept up their ceaseless music, and the light still danced among the moving columns. But at last, the rearmost regiment came, dipped its flag and disappeared. The immense cavalcade of officers and orderlies, rode slowly back to camp.

The magnificent spectacle was over. It was full of bright visions, splendid groupings, wonderful effects, rarely seen in a man's lifetime, never forgotten by the Army of the Potomac.

SECTION I

GOING TO WAR: WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE MEN WHO WENT?

A century ago millions of Americans entered a war that produced such names as Bull Run, Ball's Bluff and Pea Ridge. The names may mean little to most of us today. But at each battle men died. Others survived to fight other battles in other places. Each had his own interpretation of the experiences of war.

As the soldier entered into the conflict, he reacted in several ways. It was a time of contemplation as to why he had enlisted. It was a time of adjustment to a new way of life. It was a time of expectation. These times are reflected in the documents of this section.

What experiences did these men share? What was the meaning of war to them?

1. The following excerpt describes how some soldiers were recruited:¹

This selection describes how "war meetings" with patriotic speeches and music helped encourage men in towns across the country to enlist and thus be placed on the platform and cheered as heroes. Some had second thoughts the next day but pride prevented them from reversing their decisions.

2. The following extract from the Louisville Courier was published at Nashville, whither its editor had fled before the advance of the national forces in March, 1862:²

This has been called a fratricidal war by some, by others an irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery. We respect-

¹ Philip Van Doren Stern, ed., Soldier Life in the Union and Confederate Armies (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1961), 18.

² As quoted in Harper's Pictorial History of the Great Rebellion in the United States (Harper & Bros., New York, 1866), I, 17.

fully take issue with the authors of both these ideas. We are not the brothers of the Yankees, and the slavery question is merely the pretext, not the cause of the war. The true irresponsible conflict lies fundamentally in the hereditary hostility, the sacred animosity, the eternal antagonism between the two races engaged.

The Norman cavalier can not brook the vulgar familiarity of the Saxon Yankee, while the latter is continually devising some plan to bring down his aristocratic neighbor to his own detested level. Thus was the contest waged in the old United States. So long as Dickinson doughfaces were to be bought, and Cochrane cowards to be frightened, so long was the Union tolerable to Southern men; but when, owing to divisions in our ranks, the Yankee hirelings placed one of their own spawn over us, political connection became unendurable, and separation necessary to preserve our self-respect.

As our Norman Kinsmen in England, always a minority, have ruled their Saxon countrymen in political vassalage up to the present day, so have we, the "slave oligarchs," governed the Yankees till within a twelvemonth. We framed the Constitution, for seventy years moulded the policy of the government, and placed our own men, or "Northern men with Southern principles" in power.

On the 6th of November, 1860, the Puritans emancipated themselves, and are now in violent insurrection against their former owners. This insane holiday freak will not last long, however, for dastards in fight, and incapable of self-government, they will inevitably again fall under the control of the superior race. A few more Bull Run thrashings will bring them once more under the yoke as docile as the most loyal of our Ethiopian "chattels."

3. The following is a letter written by a soldier-to-be:³

Hinsdale, Mass., August 10, 1862

My Dear T.

Like many others, I am almost decided to enlist. . . .

Where men get in the way of human progress, I would remove them by gentle means; if they resist and are obdurate, let the triumphal car go on, for the rejoicings of the saved will drown the groans of the lost. The rebels have got right in the path of God and freedom. They refuse to move; let sword and cannon do their mission. Openly or blindly, every Union soldier is doing God's work. Let our foes succeed, and not only will we be draped

³ Henry T. Johns, Life With the Forty-Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers (Ramsey & Bisbee, Washington, D. C., 1890), 10-11.

in mourning, but the best part of humanity will be sharers of our sorrow and despair. The leaven of Protestantism, of liberty, and of education will permeate the world if we succeed. Anti-slavery men may fight with an intense enthusiasm, if they believe that the end of this war will find our flag, stripes all hidden by stars, waving over never a master or a slave; but he who takes a fuller view of the dealings of Providence with this nation, and has faith in the Divine mission imposed on it, will scarcely need the inspiration of that belief (and it is great) to continue the contest till victory or death. While African slavery is sure to go under the waves of this aroused ocean, future historians will scarcely recognize it as one of the blessed fruits of this war, so rich and full shall be the clusters of blessings that our success shall give to the world. That alone is worth a nation's blood and treasure; but comprehensive must be the memory that can recall the "first fruits," when enjoying the full harvest. The world will meet to enjoy the "harvest home" purchased by the blood and treasure of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

4. In his inaugural address (1861) Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, said:⁴

It is joyous in the midst of perilous times to look around upon a people united in heart, when one purpose of high resolve animates and actuates the whole, where the sacrifices to be made are not weighed in the balance against honor, right, liberty, and equality. Obstacles may retard, but they can not long prevent the progress of a movement sanctioned by its justice and sustained by a virtuous people. Reverently let us invoke the God of our fathers to guide and protect us in our efforts to perpetuate the principles which by His blessing they were able to vindicate, establish, and transmit to their posterity; and with a continuance of His favor ever gratefully acknowledged, we may hopefully look forward to success, to peace, to prosperity.

5. In his first inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln said:⁵

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world? In our present differences, is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with

⁴ Harper's Pictorial History, 44.

⁵ Ibid., 48.

his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal, the American people. . . .

6. In the spring of 1863, Private John F. Brobst wrote to Mary Englesby (later to be Mrs. Brobst) the following letter. Pvt. Brobst had volunteered in the 25th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment the previous fall, and was writing from camp at Columbus, Kentucky.⁶

[Brobst indicates that he feels it is his duty to help gain freedom, though he yearns to be home enjoying himself.]

7. In his first letter home after enlisting, a Union soldier commented:⁷

To stimulate volunteering, we have adopted the system of paying bounties to recruits on being mustered into the United States service. A town votes so much bounty to each recruit, expecting that the State will assume the debt as in the case of aid paid to families of soldiers. Those bounties range from \$50 to \$150, often increased largely by the selfishness or patriotism of private individuals. I suppose no intelligent man really admires this bounty system, yet it has been started, and we must adopt it, or lo! the draft! It brings out a good deal of selfishness. Men come from towns where they offer smaller bounties, and enlist where they can secure larger ones. Some carefully conceal physical defects till they are mustered in and paid, and then are discharged for disability, while others desert as soon as they pocket their bounties. Few would object to seeing them receive the full penalty of the law--death!

8. A Confederate soldier who had volunteered observed:⁸

⁶ Margaret Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1960), 15.

⁷ Henry T. Johns, Forty-Ninth Massachusetts, 13.

⁸ William G. Stevenson, Thirteen Months in the Rebel Army (A.S. Barnes and Burr, New York, 1862), 133.

The tyranny of public opinion is absolute. No young man able to bear arms dares to remain at home; even if the recruiting officers and the conscription law both fail to reach him, he falls under the proscription of the young ladies and must volunteer, as I did, though from not quite the same kind of force.

9. Another Confederate soldier observed:⁹

He dared not refuse to hear the call to arms, so plain was the duty and so urgent the call. His brethren and friends were answering the bugle-call and the roll of the drum. To stay was dishonor and shame!

He would not obey the dictates of tyranny. To disobey was death. He disobeyed and fought for his life. The romance of war charmed him, and he hurried from the embrace of his mother to the embrace of death. His playmates, his friends, and his associates were gone; he was lonesome, and he sought a reunion "in camp."

10. In a letter to Mary Englesby, John Brobst remarked about a recent photograph he had taken of himself:¹⁰

/Brobst admits that the picture of himself "does not look natural" and says he will have another taken as long as she doesn't show it to her aunt./

11. A veteran's description of the first officer under whom he served. Captain Reddish's only military experience had been as a corporal in the Black Hawk War.¹¹

/Reddish is described as "kind hearted" and "brave" but lacking in "military qualities." Though illiterate and poor in leading drills he was liked by his men./

9

Carlton McCarthy, Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia (J. W. Randolph and Ejglis, Richmond, 1888), 3.

¹⁰Margaret Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 28.

¹¹Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier (Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1920), 12.

12. A Union soldier wrote home about General Phelps who was in charge of his brigade.¹²

[Phelps' military leadership, "simplicity, earnestness and uprightness of character" are praised.]

13. Many soldiers enlisted in units made up around their home towns, as did this Union soldier. When they wrote home about the men with whom they were serving, the people back home knew the men also.¹³

[This selection is full of common gossip about the activities of the town's soldiers in the service e.g. Don's new shoes, the cost of boots, whom is tenting with whom, who is not working hard.]

14. The Army's usual rations could be changed:¹⁴

[The food that the soldiers in a particular company eat is described. One soldier asks how to make "dough goods" lighter.]

15. Pvt. Brobst wrote to his girl about the way he spent "Sunday, December the 25th, Christmas at that":¹⁵

[Brobst describes his Christmas dinner and his cooking problems.]

16. The parents of a Wisconsin volunteer infantryman received this letter from Memphis, Tennessee.¹⁶

[The infantryman describes what happens to the soldiers on an unpleasant rainy day, in which some grumble all day and others are "carrying on" in order to have fun.]

¹²John William De Forest, A Volunteer's Adventures (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1946), 11.

¹³Margaret Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 62.

¹⁴Ibid., 77.

¹⁵Ibid., 108.

¹⁶Stephen E. Ambrose, ed., A Wisconsin Boy in Dixie (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1961), 111.

17. Another aspect of a soldier's life is related by Pvt. Brobst to his girl back in Wisconsin.¹⁷

[Brobst describes in detail the 45 or 50 pound load he has to carry around as a soldier.]

18. James K. Newton enlisted in the Union Army in October of 1861. His older brother, Edward, had enlisted before him. The younger brother, Samuel, was still at home when James Newton wrote this letter home.¹⁸

[Newton regrets not being home and being lazy when he was there. He claims his regiment is not doing much good and that other regiments are getting all the honor. He fears that his younger brother, Samuel, might get drafted also and thus leave the family "entirely destitute of help."]

19. A Northern soldier who had been in the army for over a year wrote home:¹⁹

[The soldier complains about drilling the new recruits in order to teach them.]

20. A Southern soldier who had also been in the army for a time wrote:²⁰

The pride of the volunteers was sorely tried by the incoming of conscripts,--the most despised class in the army,--and their devotion to company and regiment was visibly lessened. They could not bear the thoughts of having these men for comrades, and felt the flag insulted when claimed by one of them as "his flag." It was a great source of annoyance to the true men, but was a necessity. Conscripts crowded together in companies, regiments, and brigades would have been useless, but scattered here and there among the good men, were utilized. And so, gradually, the pleasure that men had in being associated with others whom they respected as equals was taken away, and the social aspect of army life seriously marred.

¹⁷Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 53.

¹⁸Stephen E. Ambrose, A Wisconsin Boy, 29.

¹⁹Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 41.

²⁰Carlton McCarthy, Detailed Minutiae, 37.

21. To the men of D and G companies, Chester, Illinois was in "God's Country" since most of Private Stillwell's companions were from Illinois.²¹

[Stillwell describes an incident in which the two companies from Illinois excluded another company from purchasing flour for soft bread.]

22. A commanding officer wrote of the behavior of one of his men:²²

[The officer speaks of a letter he received from the wife of one of his privates which indicated she had not heard from him and that she and her children were likely to be homeless and penniless unless she received help. He indicates that she is not likely to get help from him because of his bad character which he goes on to describe.]

23. From Pvt. John Brobst to Mary Englesby:²³

[Brobst indicates how homesick he is.]

24. Captain DeForest was with the Union troops under General Butler when he wrote this letter from Louisiana on July 13, 1862.²⁴ The capture of New Orleans had been accomplished with little fighting.

[DeForest complains of lack of action in Louisiana and the resulting lack of promotions.]

25. Hollis S. Wrisley enlisted in Company H of the First Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment. Wrisley served with General McClellan through the entire Peninsula Campaign. This letter was written to Hollis' younger brother at the time the army was preparing to attack the Virginia peninsula:²⁵

²¹Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 222.

²²John William De Forest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 46.

²³Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 102.

²⁴John William De Forest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 31.

²⁵Unpublished letters of Hollis S. Wrisley in the collection of Richard H. Brown.

Camp Hooker Buds Ferry
Maryland March 22nd 1862

Dear Brother

... I sent some of my cloths
to Boston sent them in a box with
on other man there is 1 over coat
1 pair drawers 1 under shirt 2 pair
stockings 1 pair mittens 1 set
military Brass Buttons and 1 leather
strap taken from a Rebel Gun
they are at Hiram Groer
no 61 Joshua St Boston. the
first of April there will be
three months pay due me and
if I get killed I want you to
draw my pay clothing money
and all and go to Boston and
Pay W. C. Eastabrook &

fifteen dollars and ^{by} Leam Parmelee
ten dollars I borrowed the money
when I was home on a Furlough
Eastabrook keeps at 378 Shawmut
avenue and Parmelee on Chester
Park dont know the number but
he is a Bear Baker

26. The Union Army had captured New Orleans the previous April.

Captain DeForest wrote this letter from Thibodeaux, Louisiana, just across the Mississippi River from New Orleans, January 6, 1863.²⁶

DeForest notes the number of rumors of the movement of his military group to areas outside of Louisiana, but they stay in Louisiana "to keep the French from adding it to their Mexican conquest."

27. From Hollis Wrisley to his younger brother, April 10, 1862.²⁷

Steamer Kenebeck April 10

Dear Brother

We have been on Board of this vessel since last Saturday we are now leaving Fort Monroe for Yorke Town some 20 miles that is where the fight is to come off there is some 800 of us on board of this Boat besides 20 or 30 horses we are liveing mostly on Hard Bread and Cold water it is dam hard liveing and no place to Sleep the water washes clean over the deck. Cant write no more as the man leaves now

Give love to all

Yours as ever Hollis

28. The 61st Illinois Infantry Regiment, in which Leander Stillwell had enlisted, left its training camp in March of 1862.²⁸

Stillwell recounts the disappointing day in which his regiment left St. Louis on a gloomy day. He was surprised by the lack of interest the inhabitants took in them, which was contrary to his romantic picture of the glorious send-off of the heroic soldiers.

29. Captain DeForest had just notified his men to pack up in preparation to move at a minute's notice:²⁹

DeForest speculates about the possibility of some of his men running off and disgracing him and his regiment; but then is alarmed at the thought of his own possible cowardice should "the bullets begin to whistle about me."

²⁶John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 77.

²⁷Wrisley letters.

²⁸Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 222.

²⁹John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 7.

30. Before McClellan's army left the Washington, D. C. area for the Peninsula Campaign, Hollis Wrisley wrote:³⁰

Camp Hooker Bud Ferry
Maryland 1862 Mar 13th

Dear brother

... I see by the Papers that the whole
Rebbel army have left the
Potomac and it is said there
will not be a Rebbel in
Virginia in two weeks from
now. we have got them surrounded
and shall drive them into South
Carolina and then they must
give up or starve I dont
think they had better say any
thing more about Bull Run ...

yours truly H S Wrisley

think I shall be home soon

³⁰Wrisley letters.

31. The fighting around Fair Oaks Station a week before Hollis Wrisley wrote this letter sent the Confederates retreating into Richmond itself. But the fighting resulted in nearly 9,000 casualties for the two armies.³¹

Camp on the Battle Field 6 Miles
from Richmond Va June 8th 1862

Friend Lin

I read yours of the 3^d yesterday was glad to hear from you and will take the first opportunity to answer it I wrote you some ten days since you will probably hear of the Battle before this reaches you this was the hardest Battle we have had yet but we Expect a harder one Every day the men are all in good Spirits as they think the next Battle will be the last I hope it will and dont care how soon it comes I think those that are liveing of us will be in Richmond before next Saturday night there was a great Slaughter here the line of Battle was some three miles long and the ground was covered with dead some places 4 and 5 deep in 7 graves there is 64 Rebels all from one Reg there is a Rebel Burried not more than 18 inches from my tent so I have a dead man on one side and a live one on the other Think the dead one is the least Trouble as he dont Snore when our Reg. arived here it was dark the men were tired and laid down in the most convenient place the next morning one man found his head between a dead Rebels feet you may think this is awful but it is nothing after one gets use to it. . . .

Yours Truly

Hollis

32. Five weeks after the Union victory at Fair Oaks had placed General McClellan's army within six miles of the Confederate Capital of Richmond, Hollis Wrisley wrote home:³²

Camp Near James River Va
July 7th/62

Friend Lin

I received yours of the 23 & 24 and also a Paper Should have

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

written before but have not had time you have most likely seen by the Papers that the Army of the Potomac has fell back from in front of Richmond Since I last wrote you we have had a good deal of Fighting our Company has lost about thirty men in killed wounded and missing including our Captain he has a bad wound in the face and gone to Boston our Reg has had a hard time and lost a good many men I think we shall stay here a few days and get a little rest when we left in front of Richmond I was detailed with others to guard Sixty seven Hundred teams we had to pass through Swamps and woods over dam bad roads. So you can judge what kind of a time I had with a large army Chaseing us to get our train I have no desire to go through with the same performance again but my head is on my shoulders yet and I am as well as could be Expected as things look now amafraid it will be some time before the war is ended. . . . Good by this may be the last but I hope not.

Yours Truly now and forever Hollis

SECTION II

FIGHTING A WAR: WHAT DID IT MEAN
TO THE MEN WHO PARTICIPATED?

In this section the soldier has entered a different phase of military life. He has become part of the machine of war, the purpose of which is to kill the enemy. As the time of conflict comes nearer, is anticipation of battle altered? What are the impressions of conflict, of death, of survival? The evidence in this section attempts to provide the reflections of men who faced, perhaps, the most important events in their lives.

1. At the time this letter was written at New Orleans, Union gunboats had begun the campaign against Vicksburg, but it would be a year before the city would fall.¹

/This soldier reports on the misery the heat and insects caused him in the deep South./

2. Private John Brobst fought under General Grant at Vicksburg and in Tennessee. When this letter was written to Mary Englesby, in May of 1864, Brobst was in Sherman's army.²

/Brobst describes his experiences in marching toward Atlanta and mentions that his comrades-in-arms think Jeff Davis should be tied to a fence post where the grasshoppers could "kick him to death."/

3. The next five excerpts are from letters written by a Union soldier.³

/The soldier indicates deep disappointment in not having received a letter since he left home./

¹John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 37.

²Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 64.

³Stephen E. Ambrose, ed., A Wisconsin Boy, 24, 56, 59, 86, 112.

4. Private John Brobst's enlistment was nearly up when he wrote to Mary Englesby:⁴

[Brobst indicates he will wait until his time of military commitment is up before he signs up for another three years.]

5. Captain DeForest wrote of his men:⁵

[DeForest discusses the constant intoxication of many of his men and officers, especially around pay day, which was clearly demonstrated when they were called to arms for a false emergency. He claims this is due to the fact that many are Irish, city toughs who "are desperate with malaria, with the monotony of their life, and with incessant discomforts." Also, intoxication is not a military offense.]

6. Union troops surrounded Vicksburg, but the city held out from May 18 to July 3, 1863. This letter is by a Union soldier at the siege of Vicksburg.⁶

[The soldier indicates that there is a good deal of illegal gambling going on at the camp, causing many to lose all their earnings and others to make "hundreds of dollars."]

7. A year before Vicksburg fell, a Union officer in Louisiana wrote:⁷

[The officer recounts one story as an example of the poor "soldierly etiquette" of the military men which causes officers of higher rank to lash out at such offenders "in a style that scares them half out of their wits."]

8. A Union soldier who had recently participated in the battle of Fredericksburg wrote to his father:⁸

⁴Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 42.

⁵John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 40.

⁶Stephen E. Ambrose, A Wisconsin Boy, 77.

⁷John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 23.

⁸Robert Goldthwaite Carter "Four Brothers in Blue," October 1898,

Old R _____ was a character in camp, who went to make up the sum total of our many and varied phases of human nature. He had been enlisted for our regiment when nearly sixty years of age, by some recruiting officer who ought to have been hung or dismissed from service for such an inhuman act, for it was manifest the poor old man was totally unfit for the service. On the Fredericksburg campaign he had slipped and stumbled along, and unable to keep up had been left behind, and was consequently out of the fight. On every reconnoissance, tour of picket duty, and, in fact, every march, or military service of any nature whatsoever, except ordinary camp guard, he had been found unable to perform.

Every morning at surgeon's call, he crept out of his miserable "dugout," and repaired to the hospital to get excused from duty. He spent his days in the dark, gloomy, smoky hole, never leaving it except to "fall in for soup," etc., in which he failed not. The army was a cruel place for a sick man, and worse for a man who, by reason of age, incapacity, or disability, still remained about camp, without performing his share of duty.

There was little pity, true sympathy, or commiseration, therefore, for the misfortunes of this "non-hewer of wood." The company got "down on him," and from certain men he got nothing but curses and abuse, and by them was dubbed, the "Biled Owl," "Old Hell pestle," etc.

He became thoroughly discouraged at the slow process that promised, at some future date, to release him from this dreadful life. He neglected himself, and sitting over the smoke and ashes of the small fire, which he scarcely manifested enough energy to replenish, his face became pinched, smoke-begrimed, dirty and repulsive; his hair long, tangled, and matted. Soon it was discovered that he was alive with vermin, and as the spring approached it became evident that old R _____ would die from nostalgia (homesickness) or lice unless something was speedily done to set him upon his feet again. A detail was made. He was carried to the creek. His head and face were "lathered and shaved," his clothes stripped from him and burnt, and he was then scrubbed from head to foot with a blacking brush and a new, clean change of clothes placed upon him. The metamorphosis was complete, and for a week or so he was quite spruce; but he soon began to relapse into his old ways again, which so disgusted the men, that whatever pity they had entertained before was now changed into positive dislike, which soon found vent in mischief and numberless jokes. Among these was smoking him out, by dropping a blanket over the low chimney to his ranch, which always brought him out in the most hasty yet comical manner, crawling on all fours like a crab. His favorite expression was: "Oh! thunder boys,--take k-e-e-er;" when his tormentors would set up a roar of laughter.

Another favorite trick on the poor fellow was dropping cartridges down the chimney into his fire. A puff, a dull explosion, and the agility which the old man displayed when he darted out of the low mud doorway of the "shack" was remarkable. Again, watching when he was drying his pork, some deviltry-loving wag would steal up quietly and shake a lot of red pepper down the chimney, part of which going into the fire, and the rest into fry-pan, down his neck and into his nose, would cause him to splutter, sneeze, and cough, when his tormentors would shout down, "Oh, thunder, you old dead beat, take k-e-e-er!"

The rumor at last came that his discharge papers were at brigade headquarters, and when we moved out, one bright sunny morning, for a tour of picket duty, "Old R_____" had scarcely got half a mile from camp, before he stubbed his toe, went down on his knees with his immense bureau and load of rations, was ordered back to camp, got his discharge, and we never saw him more.

9. After the battle of Fair Oaks and the Union army failed in its attempt to take Richmond, Hollis Wrisley was put in charge of a patrol.⁹

Just before sunset a heavy shower came up and soaked us to the skin when it became dark I found more than half of my men were dam Cowards and I could not keep them on their Posts I put three together and then they could see Everything to frighten them one man came running to me about 11 o'clock said he Could see 2 Steam Boats Comming down the River and he should think there was five or six hundred soldiers I did not believe him but a man standing by my side did and he dropped as quick as if he had been shot left him went up the River half a mile Everything was Still and quiet where the man saw the Steamboats the Water is not more than 2 feet deep and all Rocks at that there was a tree toad fel on another mans foot and he Came running to me said some-boddy was throughing stones at him from the other side of the Canal it made me mad as I new it was a dam lie I sent them all back to their posts and swore I would shoot the first man that left his post again without my leave and they obeyed me the man whose legs gave out at the Steamboat alarm I did not see again till Friday morning.

10. In May of 1864, Private John Brobst was with Sherman's army in Georgia as it lived off the countryside.¹⁰

[Brobst comments on his acquisition of domestic skills while in the Army and laments the possibility that all the girls will be taken by the bachelors back home while he is off to war. He then mentions how he steals animals from local farms.

⁹Wrisley letters.

¹⁰Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 54.

11. From the diary of David Hunter Strother, Chief of Staff for General Hunter in the Union raids up the Shenandoah Valley, an incident of June 6, 1864:¹¹

✓Strother describes how one soldier "hooked" a goose with bread used as bait and ran off with the goose tied to his leg, while the owner thought the goose was chasing the soldier.✓

12. While John Brobst was campaigning with General Sherman's army in eastern Mississippi in March of 1864, Mary Englesby received the following account of his activities:¹²

✓Brobst tells of the "fun" that "a lot of us boys" had wrecking railroad engines and track.✓

13. By the time Elisha Stockwell was eighteen years old, at the time the following incident took place, he had been in the Union army three years.¹³

✓Stockwell recounts how he and a companion stole peaches from a woman who refused to sell them any food.✓

14. A Union soldier wrote to his parents from near Corinth, Mississippi in August of 1862, three months after he had participated in the battle of Shiloh:¹⁴

✓The soldier explains how his military group stopped at a plantation and had the Negroes cook the livestock on the plantation for a meal while divesting the plantation bee hives of honey. The owner, meanwhile, was off fighting Union forces.✓

¹¹Cecil D. Eby, Jr., ed., A Virginia Yankee in the Civil War (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1961), 246.

¹²Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 37.

¹³Byron R. Abernethy, ed., Private Elisha Stockwell, Jr. Sees The Civil War (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1958), 180.

¹⁴Stephen E. Ambrose, ed., A Wisconsin Boy, 31.

15. A Union soldier with General Butler in Louisiana wrote in November of 1862:¹⁵

[A description is given of the plunder of deserted property by Negroes and runaway soldiers. The soldier's servant brought him 10 pounds of silver he had stolen which could not be returned because the owner's whereabouts were unknown.]

16. Many of the guerilla activities during the Civil War involved Southern soldiers. This opinion was by a Confederate soldier, who was not a guerilla.¹⁶

The second prominent characteristic of guerilla warfare, is the license it gives to take by force from supposed enemies or neutrals, horses, cash, munitions of war, and, in short, any thing which can aid the party for which he fights; with the promise of full pay for whatever he brings off to his headquarters. This and destructiveness. As it displaces patriotism from the breast of the fighter, and substitutes in its room the desire for plunder, the men thus engaged become highway robbers in organized and authorized bands. Nor do guerrilla bands long confine their depredations to known enemies. Wherever a good horse can be found, wherever silver plate is supposed to be secreted, wherever money might be expected, there they concentrate and rob without inquiry as to the character of the owner. Hence the system is destructive to all confidence, and to the safety of even innocent and defenseless females.

17. Five days after the disastrous defeat of the Union Army of the Potomac at the battle of Fredericksburg, a Confederate artilleryman wrote in his diary:¹⁷

[The Confederate soldier describes how the dead Union soldiers were stripped of all their clothing and belongings by plunderers. They were then buried in large pits by their own men.]

¹⁵John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 73.

¹⁶William G. Stevenson, Thirteen Months, 110.

¹⁷William H. Runge, Four Years in the Confederate Artillery (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1961), 39.

18. After the fighting at Fair Oaks, near Richmond, in the summer of 1862, Private Wrisley observed in a letter home:¹⁸

one Rebbel was shot while Picking a Union Soldiers Pocket another was found dead with three Pairs of our Pants on and the forth Pair half way on guess he ment to go into the Clothing Business but the Poor Devil is dead so let him rest if he can with four pairs of Stolen Pants on

19. The Union Army of the Potomac had been badly defeated at Fredericksburg in December of 1862. President Lincoln Reviewed the army in April of 1863 as it was preparing to again attack Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.¹⁹

On this day the Fifth corps was reviewed by the president. Whether intentionally or inadvertently, Mr. Lincoln had been furnished with a small, pony built horse about fourteen hands high. The president's legs looked longer than ever, and his toes seemed almost to touch the ground. He wore the same solemn suit of black that he always assumed, a tall, silk hat, a little the worse for wear, with a long, full skirted black coat.

He had neglected to strap down his pant legs while riding, and, as most of the time he was kept at a jog trot, his pants began to draw up until finally, first one white drawers leg, then the other began to be conspicuous, with strings dangling. The hard trot had settled his tall beaver hat on the back of his head, until it had rested upon his ears, which were large and somewhat projecting, and it looked as though it had been purposely jammed down into that position. Altogether he presented a very comical picture, calculated to provoke laughter along the entire length of the lines, had it not been for that sad, anxious face, so full of melancholy foreboding, that peered forth from his shaggy eyebrows.

20. At the time of the two major Union victories at Gettysburg and at Vicksburg, a Union staff officer stationed in Washington, D. C. wrote in his diary:²⁰

¹⁸ Wrisley letters.

¹⁹ Robert Goldthwaite Carter "Four Brothers in Blue," October, 1898, 366.

²⁰ Cecil B. Eby, Jr., ed., A Virginia Yankee, 191.

✓The officer remarks about the appearance of Lincoln before crowds at the White House just after being notified of Vicksburg's surrender. He expresses admiration for the President and concludes that he "deserves well of his country and of history."

21. This same Union soldier, who had lived all his life in Virginia, commented in his diary:²¹

✓The President is described as a representative and reflection of America who is a result of the system and if he fails, "the system has failed conclusively."

22. A letter from a Wisconsin soldier:²²

✓The soldier expresses great pride in his regiment.✓

23. Private John Brobst, who had fought with Grant's army in the West, wrote the following letters to Mary Englesby:²³

✓Brobst expresses pride in the ability of Grant's army to win "every time" while denigrating the Army of the Potomac.✓

24. A portion of a Confederate soldier's letter dated October 3, 1863, was written near Chattanooga Tennessee before the Union victory at Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain.²⁴

✓The Confederate soldier expresses hope that he will take command of the forces he is fighting with because most of the men have great faith in his judgment.✓

25. The Union soldier who wrote the following incident was with General Sherman's army in Georgia late in the war.²⁵

²¹Ibid., 121.

²²Stephen E. Ambrose, ed., A Wisconsin Boy, 63.

²³Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 38, 21, 136.

²⁴Susan Leigh Blackford, ed., Letters from Lee's Army (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1947), 211.

²⁵Byron R. Abernethy, ed., Private . . . Stockwell, 147.

The soldier tells of discipline problems in the ranks while the troops were marching back to camp and how a Colonel Ward quietly and firmly resolved the problem, which was an example of why "the men all like him."

26. In the battle of Cold Harbor on June 3, 1864, Grant lost 7,000 men and Lee lost 1,500. This account is from the diary of a Confederate soldier:²⁶

Admiration is expressed for officers in charge of the soldier's battery. It is noted how one officer cried because his men were being killed.

27. Late in the war, Leander Stillwell participated in a charge against Rebel lines near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, he wrote:²⁷

Stillwell describes how a general moved in front of a faltering Union line of soldiers, exposing himself to Confederate gunfire, and led them on to victory.

28. John Brobst had sixteen months of his enlistment left when he wrote to Mary Englesby in March of 1864.²⁸

Sixteen months more and we expect to see sweet home, if the rebs don't object to our going north and given us a land warrant for a farm down here about six feet long and three feet wide. There are lots of such warrants.

29. From a Confederate soldier, July 20th, 1861. This was written the day before he went into battle at the first battle of Bull Run.²⁹

The thoughts of a thinking man the day before a battle are necessarily solemn, he may be buoyant and hopeful, yet there is a dread uncertainty that comes over his thoughts both as to himself and those dependent on him which makes him grave and almost sad.

²⁶William H. Runge, Four Years, 80.

²⁷Leander Stillwell, The Story of A Common Soldier, 243.

²⁸Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 42.

²⁹Susan Leigh Blackford, ed., Letters, 27.

30. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote to his parents in September of 1862:³⁰

/Holmes contends that there is no need of "pulling a long mug" every time he goes into battle for fear he will be killed and left unsaid things he might have wished to say, in order to shirk the responsibilities of his past life./

31. A Yankee captain noted in an 1864 diary entry:³¹

I yesterday overheard a freckled-faced boy discoursing with a comrade in this wise, "Some men when they go in think they are going to be killed. That's not a good way. I try not to think about it at all."

32. After the battle of Shiloh in 1862, a Northern soldier reflected:³²

/Two different Confederate soldiers who were posed in death -- ones face "gleaming with Satanic fury", the other "calm and natural" -- are contrasted./

The four documents which follow give four different impressions of a part of the battle of Shiloh. The first, an official regimental account, was published in 1866. The second is a letter which a Union soldier in the Fourteenth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry wrote to his family less than a week after the battle. The third document is a series of statements by General Grant about the action that involved the Fourteenth Wisconsin. General Grant's Memoirs were published in 1885. The last account is that of an eighty-one-year-old Civil War veteran as he remembered that part of the battle in 1927.

33. Regimental Account³³

³⁰Mark DeWolfe Howe, ed., Touched with Fire (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1946), 64.

³¹Cecil D. Eby, Jr., ed., A Virginia Yankee, 240.

³²Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 64.

³³Wm. DeLoss Love, Wisconsin in the War of the Rebellion (Church and Goodman, New York, 1866), 483-489.

At three o'clock Sabbath morning, April 6th, the rebels had breakfasted, and made ready for their advance and attack. All nature was joyful; a refreshing rain had passed; the air was pure and delicious; the birds were singing among the blooming trees. . . .

The space that became the field of battle was about three miles square. Shiloh Church--a barnlike building--was about two miles from the landing, and on the night of the first day's battle was Beauregard's headquarters. Sherman was near it when the battle commenced. The rebels fought, not for Shiloh, but rather for the landing; the chief part of the fighting was done nearer the landing than the church; and although Beauregard and the rebel Congress have named the battle Shiloh, let it be called Pittsburg Landing.

The Sixteenth and Eighteenth Wisconsin Regiments were in the left Brigade of the left (General Prentiss') division. The Eighteenth had reached the locality only the night before, and had not even completed the erection of their tents. On that Saturday night General Prentiss sent out on picket, a mile and a half--one account says half a mile--eight companies, under Colonel Moore, four of them being, A, B, C, and D, of the Sixteenth Wisconsin, under Lieutenant Colonel Fairchild. At half-past four o'clock on Sunday morning they were ordered to advance and reconnoitre. Proceeding half a mile they came upon the enemy's pickets, stationed behind a fence. There were really about 3,000 men, and immediately fired upon our soldiers, killing Captain Saxe and Orderly Williams, of the Sixteenth. This was the beginning of the battle. The Federals retreated before such a superior force, and the rebels pursued them.

Lieutenant Colonel Fairchild was the first to announce in camp that the rebels were coming. The Sixteenth was immediately formed in line of battle, about thirty rods from their tents, and the Eighteenth, Colonel Alban, was formed on their left. About fifteen minutes after, the enemy showed himself in great force, and as he approached the Sixteenth opened fire, which was replied to by a terrific fire from the rebels, who advanced upon the whole division, pressing our front and flanking our left. There was no panic in our lines, unless with individuals; the men fought bravely; but they must either surrender, or be shot, or fall back; the last they did slowly, fighting as they went. The flank movement by the enemy on our left, finally resulted in the capture of General Prentiss and 2,000 of our troops, among them some of the Eighteenth Wisconsin. Colonel Allen, a skillful commander, saved his regiment from capture by changing front when he was flanked, and falling back to fight again. Eight times he did this, had two horses shot under him, and then was wounded and carried from the field.

In General Sherman's division his pickets were driven in about sunrise, and his line of battle was then hastily formed. The attack was no less a surprise there than at the left. Some of the men ran, but most stood their ground. His position was on a ridge, with a creek in front, which the enemy must cross to reach him. . . . The rebels made three grand attacks; one at six o'clock in the morning, one at half-past ten o'clock, and one at four in the afternoon. When the last one came all seemed nearly lost. But the artillery, that had already done excellent execution, began to do more. Colonel Webster, of General Grant's staff, skillfully and rapidly placed on a ridge near the landing sixty cannon--among them three thirty-twos and two eight-inch howitzers. Captain Gwin, of the gunboat Tyler, sent to General Grant for permission to shell the woods and sweep the ravine up which the rebels were coming. Reply was returned that he might do it if he thought best. He did it; Captain Shirk, of the Lexington, joined him; they took an enfilading fire upon the approaching enemy, compelled them to bring up their artillery, and to change their point of attack. But again the gunboats reach and sweep them down, and the sixty cannon lining the crest plunge their terrible shots into their ranks, and they fall back to turn and face the fire a third time, which was the last on that day. The rebels concluded to rejoice over what they had gained, and await for the rest until the morrow. Nearly every Federal camp held in the morning was now in the enemy's possession. Some they had destroyed; others they had rearranged for their own comfort, as though they expected never to lose them. In some they had eaten the warm morning meal prepared and waiting for our men when the battle began. In some tents they had fallen upon the sleeping and bayoneted them, and such wounded surviving ones were found there by our men the next day. . . .

All night long the transports were carrying troops across the stream and up from Savannah. Among the rest the Fourteenth Wisconsin, which had disembarked at Savannah on coming up the Tennessee, now landed at Pittsburg at midnight, stood on the bank in the rain and mud until morning, and then went into the second day's battle, being temporarily joined to General Smith's or W. H. L. Wallace's division. . . . After reaching the field of battle that day, the Fourteenth Wisconsin lay awhile in a ravine. Then they were ordered to charge upon a rebel battery. They did so; across a ravine, over a brook, through a thicket, beyond a narrow road, and captured it; but not being supported, fell back. Twice more they did the same, with like result. The fourth time they held it, and one of the guns--a trophy--spiked in the first charge by Lieutenant Staley, was brought home to Wisconsin. At the battery were found at last (six) seventeen dead horses and sixty dead rebels. For their bravery the Fourteenth obtained the title, "Wisconsin Regulars." They went without food during that day, and served as guard at the landing during the night, and were afterwards retained there as provost guard. . . .

34. A Letter³⁴

One of the soldiers discusses his involvement in the preparation for the battle and the actual battle itself, indicating that he had little sense of the over-all developments and consequences of it.

35. General Grant's Memoirs³⁵

During the night rain fell in torrents and our troops were exposed to the storm without shelter. I made my headquarters under a tree a few hundred yards back from the river bank. My ankle was so much swollen from the fall off my horse the Friday night preceding, and the bruise was so painful, that I could get no rest. The drenching rain would have precluded the possibility of sleep without this additional cause. Some time after midnight, growing restive under the storm and the continuous pain, I moved back to the log-house under the bank. This had been taken as a hospital, and all night wounded men were being brought in, their wounds dressed, a leg or an arm amputated as the case might require, and everything being done to save life or alleviate suffering. The sight was more unendurable than encountering the enemy's fire, and I returned to my tree in the rain. . . .

In a very short time the battle became general all along the line. This day everything was favorable to the Union side. We had now become the attacking party. The enemy was driven back all day, as we had been the day before, until finally he beat a precipitate retreat. . . .

I wanted to pursue, but had not the heart to order the men who had fought desperately for two days, lying in the mud and rain whenever not fighting, and I did not feel disposed to positively order Buell, or any part of his command, to pursue. . . .

Shiloh was the severest battle fought at the West during the war, and but few in the East equalled it for hard determined fighting. I saw an open field, in our possession on the second day before, so covered with dead that it would have been possible to walk across the clearing, in any direction, stepping on dead bodies, without a foot touching the ground. On our side National and Confederate troops were mingled together in about equal proportions; but on the remainder of the field nearly all were Confederates.

³⁴Stephen E. Ambrose, ed., A Wisconsin Boy, 13-16.

³⁵U. S. Grant Personal Memoirs (Charles L. Webster & Co., New York, 1885), I, 349-350.

36. A Soldier's Memoirs³⁶

✓The Union soldier recalls the personal fears and experiences he had in the battle, and his ultimate relief when he was wounded while retreating and told to go behind the lines beyond the range of Confederate guns.✓

37. Harper's Monthly (September, 1864) published an article by John William DeForest which recounted an observation of the summer of 1862.³⁷

✓It is indicated that "the terror of battle", especially with veterans, comes and goes with the degree of peril.✓

38. From a camp in Kentucky in 1862, Isaac Jackson wrote home:³⁸

✓Jackson asserts the need to have letters from home.✓

39. To those at home letters also had special significance, particularly, after such a battle as Shiloh (1862):³⁹

✓The intense interest in letters from the battlefield is indicated in this account when numerous people in a town brought a letter from the post office to the addressee in order to have the news from the front read to them.✓

40. Oliver Wendell Holmes was wounded at the battle of Ball's Bluff. Eight months later he wrote his father:⁴⁰

✓Holmes notes that other regiments were given more credit at Ball's Bluff despite his regiment's outstanding fighting and greater losses.✓

³⁶Byron R. Abernethy, ed., Private . . . Stockwell, 107, 13-23 passim.

³⁷John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 59.

³⁸Joseph Orville Jackson, ed., "Some of the Boys . . ." The Civil War Letters of Isaac Jackson (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1960), 14.

³⁹Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 66.

⁴⁰Mark DeWolfe Howe, ed., Touched With Fire, 52.

41. Private Stillwell reflected upon a conversation which took place after the battle of Shiloh (1862):⁴¹

Stillwell asks a fellow soldier by the name of Charlie how he felt when the Union forces were forced to retreat. Charlie indicates that because he had no relatives he did not fear for himself but felt badly for the cause./

42. While campaigning in Arkansas against Confederate General Price in 1863, Private Stillwell was hospitalized with malaria. His recovery was slow.⁴²

Stillwell indicates a desire to get back with his regiment and recounts a story in which he asked the division surgeon if he could have permission to return. He was at first refused but with trembling persistence he was allowed to return./

43. To "Dear respected Friend Mary" John Brobst wrote from Arkansas in January, 1864:⁴³

Brobst expresses the wish that Mary enjoyed herself over the holidays and indicates that he had fun in the "real soldier fashion," but that it amounted to "just the sum of a O." He notes that one of the men Mary once danced with is now dead, and greatly missed./

44. In August of 1864, Private Brobst was among Sherman's troops as they marched through Georgia.⁴⁴

Brobst recounts a time in which "Johnny Rebs" socialized pleasantly with Union troops and indicates that if the soldiers could they would have peace very soon, but that "a few old heads" will not settle the war for "it is filling their pockets with green backs."/

⁴¹ Leander Stillwell, The Story of A Common Soldier, 50.

⁴² Ibid., 154.

⁴³ Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 80.

45. Private Stillwell remembered a comrade-in-arms:⁴⁵

Stillwell tells of one soldier who faked a wound in order to avoid battle. When charged with this he "just hung his head and said nothing."

46. During the Battle of Cedar Creek (1864) Captain DeForest's unit fell back in defeat.⁴⁶

DeForest analyzes the nature of fugitives from battle who often coolly retreat and do not wish to risk their lives again. He concludes that the chief trouble with them, and officers who have lost their command, is that they have lost their place in "the military machine," and will not fight in or lead regiments other than their own.

47. James Newton was captured by the Confederates and paroled. While confined to his barracks in November of 1862 he wrote to his parents:⁴⁷

Newton expresses a wish to escape in order to be home for Thanksgiving but claims that lack of money to pay his way makes an escape a bad risk.

48. 1864. A Confederate officer wrote in his diary:⁴⁸

January 8. Slight snow. Saw a man shot today for desertion. Poor fellow! His crime was only going home to see after his wife and children. It was his third or fourth offense. His name was Martin! He was buried where he was executed. Did he not die for his country?

49. Following the Union defeat at Fredericksburg (1862), Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote home:⁴⁹

Holmes claims that there is not much likelihood of an ultimate Union victory.

⁴⁵ Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 119.

⁴⁶ John William DeForest, A Volunteer's Adventures, 220.

⁴⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, ed., A Wisconsin Boy, 44.

⁴⁸ William H. Runge, Four Years, 65.

⁴⁹ Mark DeWolfe Howe, ed., Touched with Fire, 79.

50. Oliver Wendell Holmes had been in the Union Army over four years when he wrote this letter to his mother in June of 1864.⁵⁰

✓Holmes contends that the duty to go on fighting has ceased for him and that he should determine his own sense of duty.✓

51. The war had ended when James Newton wrote to his parents:⁵¹

✓Newton expresses doubts, but hope, that he can adjust to civilian life although he is anxious to be discharged.✓

52. A Confederate artilleryman wrote in his diary:⁵²

✓The soldier expresses grief for the loss of life in the war in 1865 and feels a sense of hopelessness for the future.✓

53. The year was 1865. The place was a Union prison. The author was a Confederate soldier.⁵³

✓The Confederate soldier, on his birthday, expresses sorrow for the past and pessimism for the future course of the war for the Confederacy.✓

54. A Confederate soldier commented:⁵⁴

Many feared the war would have a fair chance to "make a record," and that when "the cruel war was over" they would have to sit by, dumb, and hear the more fortunate ones, who had "smelt the battle," tell to admiring home circles the story of the bloody field. Most of these "got in" in time to satisfy their longings, and "got out" to learn that the man who did not go, but "kept out," and made money, was more admired and courted than the "poor fellow" with one leg or arm less than is "allowed."

55. Barry Benson was a young Confederate sharpshooter in the First South Carolina Brigade. He wrote that:⁵⁵

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Stephen E. Ambrose, *A Wisconsin Boy*, 158.

⁵²William H. Runge, *Four Years*, 114.

⁵³Ibid., 131.

⁵⁴Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 35.

⁵⁵Susan Williams Benson, "And All About Men Were Crying . . ." *American Heritage*, Vol. XIII, No. 6 (October, 1962), 44.

[Benson describes the scene at Appomattox in which Lee surrendered. He notes disbelief and then overwhelming sadness, shared by other sobbing Confederate soldiers, at the surrender.]

56. In a Union prison the April 11, 1865 diary entry of a Confederate soldier read:⁵⁶

[Grief and anxiety for himself, his family and his country is expressed by the Confederate soldier. He regrets that so many Southern soldiers have died in vain.]

57. April 22, 1865. A letter bearing this date was sent by John Brobst to his future wife:⁵⁷

[Brobst says that he would rather have had some of the Northern armies defeated rather than lose Lincoln.]

⁵⁶William H. Runge, Four Years, 133.

⁵⁷Mary Brobst Roth, ed., Well, Mary, 50.

SECTION III

PEACE: WHAT DID IT MEAN TO

THE MEN WHO RETURNED?

A great war neared its end. To each man who had survived the conflict it meant something different -- not only a few days after, but many years later as well. War had changed them, and many were not certain how.

As you near the end of this unit, as you read what men remembered of war, you might ask yourself what part of the military experience men remembered, was it the glory that perhaps drew them to war at its beginning? Was it the impression of death and the smell of battle? Was it the comradeship they knew?

In short, what does war mean to the men who fight it? More particularly, what did the Civil War mean to the men who fought it?

1. General U. S. Grant described the meeting at Appomattox:¹

I had known General Lee in the old army, and had served with him in the Mexican War; but did not suppose, owing to the difference in our age and rank, that he would remember me; while I would more naturally remember him distinctly, because he was the chief of staff of General Scott in the Mexican War. . . . What General Lee's feelings were I do not know. As he was a man of much dignity, with an impassible face, it was impossible to say whether he felt inwardly glad that the end had finally come, or felt sad over the result, and was too manly to show it. Whatever his feelings, they were entirely concealed from my observation; but my own feelings, which had been quite jubilant on the receipt of his letter, were sad and depressed. I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought, and one for which there was the least excuse. I do not question, however, the sincerity of the great mass of those who were opposed to us.

¹ U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs, I, 488.

General Lee was dressed in a full uniform which was entirely new, and was wearing a sword of considerable value, very likely the sword which had been presented by the State of Virginia; at all events, it was an entirely different sword from the one that would ordinarily be worn in the field. In my rough traveling suit, the uniform of a private with the straps of a lieutenant-general, I must have contrasted very strangely with a man so handsomely dressed, six feet high and of faultless form. . . .

We soon fell into a conversation about old army times. He remarked that he remembered me very well in the old army; and I told him that as a matter of course I remembered him perfectly, but from the difference in our rank and years . . . I had thought it very likely that I had not attracted his attention sufficiently to be remembered by him after such a long interval. Our conversation grew so pleasant that I almost forgot the object of our meeting. After the conversation had run on in this style for some time, General Lee called my attention to the object of our meeting, and said that he had asked for this interview for the purpose of getting from me the terms I proposed to give his army.

2. General Robert E. Lee to his army:²

General Order No. 9

After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to surrender by overwhelming numbers and resources. I need not tell the survivors of so many hard fought battles, who have remained steadfast to the last, that I have consented to this result from no distrust of them. But feeling that valor and devotion could accomplish nothing that would compensate for the loss that must have attended a continuance of the contest, I have determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose past service have endeared them to their countrymen.

By the terms of agreement, officers and men can return to their homes and remain there until exchanged.

You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed, and I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you his blessings and protection.

With an unceasing admission of your constancy and devotion to your country and grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration for myself, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

- R. E. Lee

² Harper's Pictorial History, I, 771.

3. In 1904 Confederate General John Gordon remembered defeat:³

When the proud and sensitive sons of Dixie came to a full realization of the truth that the Confederacy was overthrown and their leader had been compelled to surrender his once invincible army, they could no longer control their emotions, and tears ran like water down their shrunken faces. The flags which they still carried were objects of undisguised affection. These Southern banners had gone down before overwhelming numbers; and torn by shells, riddled by bullets, and laden with the powder and smoke of battle, they aroused intense emotion in the men who had so often followed them to victory. Yielding to overpowering sentiment, these high-mettled men began to tear the flags from the staffs and hide them in their bosoms, as they wet them with burning tears.

4. In a chapter entitled "Brave Soldiers' Homeward Bound" a Confederate soldier described a scene that occurred twenty-three years before:⁴

Early in the morning of Wednesday, the 12th of April, without the stirring drums or the bugle call of old, the camp awoke to the new life. Whether or not they had a country these soldiers did not know. Home to many, when they reached it, was graves and ashes. At any rate there must be, somewhere on earth, a better place than a muddy, smoky camp in a piece of scrubby pines — better company than gloomy, hungry comrades and inquisitive enemies, and something in the future more exciting, if not more hopeful, than nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep, nothing to do, and nowhere to go.

5. In 1865 a Confederate soldier in his diary reflected upon the Southern defeat:⁵

[Although expressing sorrow for the suffering and defeat of the Confederate forces, the soldier expresses pride in the "Rebs'" efforts.]

³General John B. Gordon, Reminiscences of the Civil War (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1904), 445.

⁴Carlton McCarthy, Detailed Minutiae, 159.

⁵William H. Runge, Four Years, 137.

6. A Union soldier remembered his return.⁶

Stillwell recounts how his arrival in his home town did not arouse any reception by even a single person and that after getting back to work on his father's farm, it seemed he had only been gone one day.

7. The war had ended. A Southern soldier was home.⁷

The soldier weighs in balance the hardships and values of the war, noting in the latter case that the "noblest impulses" were exhibited and lasting friendships made.

8. Leander Stillwell in 1920 reflected on one aspect of battle:⁸

Stillwell claims that pride more than anything else kept the soldiers from retreating.

9. In 1920, Leander Stillwell, then a judge in Illinois, was asked by his son to write his experiences in the Civil War.⁹

Stillwell contends that "ninety-nine out of a hundred" boys who entered the war expected to return home from a victorious war as military heroes. He also notes the parochial background of most of them.

10. Leave-taking had a special meaning for a Union veteran looking back in 1890:¹⁰

There are a few more solemn, subduing scenes than the departure of a regiment for the seat of war. Many of the men assume a levity that poorly hides their own sadness, and as poorly comforts those who are to remain behind. Mothers, wives, children, were to bid, to look, the last adieu. Many a mother than pressed

⁶Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 277-278.

⁷William H. Runge, Four Years, 145.

⁸Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 269.

⁹Ibid., 32.

¹⁰Henry T. Johns, Forty-ninth Massachusetts, 18.

her aching head into silence, and heroically struggled to fasten in her boy's heart the memory of a farewell smile. Kind, but vain mockery! To many wives, the measured tread of that thousand men, marching from home and life, seemed to be over their own hearts. They felt they were nearing a day when there would be

"A blush as of roses
Where roses never grew;"

and though they were not deficient in the spirit of self-sacrifice, nor heedless of the glory of the strife, yet the farewell was with

"Ah me! This glory and this grief
Agrees not well together."

When the cars started, there was the usual cheering given by the soldiers as evidence of their cheerfulness, and taken up by those who had no very near friends leaving. Those who had emptied hearts and homes for their country's sake, fearing it might be -- forever -- cheered not, but gazed on the receding train till out of sight, and then turned sorrowfully homeward, to bear alone the suspense of months, while their loved ones should enter into scenes whose novelty and excitement would lift up their sadness. Not all the brave go to war.

11. In 1904, General John Gordon, late of the Confederate States of America, remembered leave-taking in another place.¹¹

. . .with bounding hearts we joined the host of volunteers then rushing to Montgomery. The line of our travel was one unbroken scene of enthusiasm. Bonfires blazed from the hills at night, and torchlight processions, with drums and fifes, paraded the streets of the towns. In the absence of real cannon, blacksmiths' anvils were made to thunder our welcome. Vast throngs gathered at the depots, filling the air with their shoutings, and bearing banners with all conceivable devices, proclaiming Southern independence, and pledging the last dollar and man for the success of the cause. Staid matrons and gayly bedecked maidens rushed upon the cars, pinned upon our lapels the blue cockades, and cheered us by chanting in thrilling chorus:

In Dixieland I take my stand
To live and die in Dixie

At other times they sang "The Bonnie Blue Flag," and the Raccoon Roughs, as they were thenceforward known, joined in the transporting chorus:

Hurrah, Hurrah, for Southern rights hurrah!
Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears
a single star!

¹¹ General John B. Gordon, Reminiscences, 9-10.

12. To George Eggleston, a Confederate veteran, one aspect of military life was vivid in 1889:¹²

The drilling, of which there was literally no end, was simply funny. Maneuvers of the most utterly impossible sort were carefully taught to the men. Every amateur officer had his own pet system of tactics, and the effect of the incongruous teachings, when brought out in battalion drill, closely resembled that of the music at Mr. Bob Sawyer's party, where each guest sang the chorus to the tune he knew best. . . .

13. Another kind of soldier was remembered in 1889 by George Eggleston:¹³

Among other odd specimens we had in our battery the most ingenious malingerer I ever heard of. He was in service four years, drew his pay regularly, was of robust frame and in perfect health always, and yet during the whole time he was never off the sick-list for a single day. His capacity to endure contempt was wholly unlimited, else he would have been shamed by the gives of the men, the sneers of the surgeons, and the denunciations, of the officers, into some show, at least of a disposition to do duty. He spent the greater part of his time in hospital, never staying in camp a moment longer than he was obliged to do. When discharged, as a well man, from one hospital, he would start toward his command, and continue in that direction till he came to another infirmary, when he would have a relapse at once, and gain admission there. Discharged again he would repeat the process at the next hospital, and one day near the end of the war he counted up something like a hundred different post and general hospitals of which he had been an inmate, while he had been admitted to some of them more than half a dozen times each. The surgeons resorted to a variety of expedients by which to get rid of him. They burned his back with hot coppers; gave him the most nauseous mixtures; put him on the lowest possible diet; treated him to cold shower-baths four or five times daily; and did everything else they could think of to drive him from the hospitals, but all to no purpose. In camp it was much the same. On the morning after his arrival from the hospital he would wake up with some totally new ache, and report himself upon the sick-list. There was no way by which to conquer his obstinacy, and, as I have said, he escaped duty to the last.

14. Military life had many aspects. A southern veteran in 1888 considered one:¹⁴

¹²George Cary Eggleston, A Rebel's Recollections (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1889), 20.

¹³Ibid., 189-191.

¹⁴Carlton McCarthy, Detailed Minutiae, 78.

But here comes the mail, -- papers, letters, packages. Here comes news from home, sweet, tender, tearful, hopeful, sad, distressing news; joyful news of victory and sad news of defeat; pictures of happy homes, or sad wailing over homes destroyed! But the mail has arrived and we cannot change the burden it has brought. We can only pity the man who goes empty away from the little group assembled about the mail-bag, and rejoice with him who strolls away with a letter near his heart. Suppose he finds therein the picture of a curly head. Just four years old! Suppose the last word in it is "Mother." Or suppose it concludes with a signature having that peculiarly helpless, but courageous and hopeful air, which can be imparted only by the hand of a girl whose heart goes with the letter! Once more, happy, happy soldier.

15. In 1888 a Confederate veteran remembered: ¹⁵

As he journeys to the camp, how dear do all at home become! Oh, what holy tears he sheds! His heart, how tender! Then, as he nears the line, and sees for the first time the realities of war, the passing sick and weary, and the wounded and bloody dead, his soldier spirit is born; he smiles, his chest expands, his eyes brighten, his heart swells with pride. He hurries on, and soon stands in the magic circle around the glowing fire, the admired and loved pet of a dozen true hearts. Is he happy? Aye! Never before has he felt such glorious, swelling, panting joy. He's a soldier now! . . . He marches. Dare he murmur or complain? No; the eyes of all are upon him, and endurance grows silently, till pain and weariness are familiar, and cheerfully borne. At home he would be pitied and petted; but now he must endure, or have the contempt of the strong spirits around him. . . . He is hungry, -- so are others; and he must not only bear the privation, but he must divide his pitiful meal, when he gets it, with his comrades; and so generosity strikes down selfishness. In a thousand ways he is tried, and that by sharp critics. His smallest faults are necessarily apparent, for, in the varying conditions of the soldier, every quality is put to the test. If he shows the least cowardice he is undone. His courage must never fail. He must be manly and independent, or he will be told he's a baby, ridiculed, teased, and despised. . . . In the army the young man learned to value men for what they were, and not on account of education, wealth, or station; and so his attachments, when formed, were sincere and durable, and he learned what constitutes a man and a desirable and reliable friend. The stern demands upon the boy, and the unrelenting criticisms of the mess, soon bring to mind the gentle forbearance, kind remonstrance, and loving counsels of parents and homefolks; and while he thinks, he weeps, and loves, and reverences, and yearns after the things against which he once strove, and under which he chafed and complained. Home, father, mother, sister, -- oh, how far away; oh, how dear!

¹⁵ Ibid., 207-210.

16. Another aspect of military life was recalled by a Confederate veteran after twenty-three years:¹⁶

Men who, when surrounded by their old companions, were brave and daring soldiers, full of spirit and hope, when thrust among strangers for whom they cared not, and who cared not for them, became dull and listless, lost their courage, and were slowly but surely "demoralized." They did, it is true, in many cases, stand up to the last, but they did it on dry principle, having none of that enthusiasm and delight in duty which once characterized them.

17. 1920. Leander Stillwell recalled a conversation that had an influence upon him:¹⁷

[Stillwell recounts how he was told that his father would rather have had him killed rather than to have him disgrace the family by running. This expectation, Stillwell claims, caused him to fight despite his dread of battle.]

18. Joel Brown, a Union veteran, remembered a battle:¹⁸

Nearly thirty years have passed since 1864, and scenes clear and bright to memory once have become dim and misty now. Time and the smoke of the battle of life have obscured the recollection of those days of trial and danger. One scene, in which it was my lot to act an humble part, is burned on my memory so deeply that nothing will ever efface it. I have only to close my eyes and I can see it clear and distinct as I saw then. It was the charge of the famous First Maine Heavy Artillery at Petersburg on the eighteenth day of June, 1864. . . .

How well I remember that first flight where our heavy artillery brigade under the lead of the gallant Gen. Tyler confronted the whole of the rebel Gen. Elwell's corps and held them in check for two hours and a half until reinforcements arrived and drove them off the field. The rebs outnumbered us three or four to one, . . . all of this comes back to me as a dream.

During all this marching and fighting our regiment had dwindled down until scarce nine hundred men remained, but we had

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷ Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 270.

¹⁸ Joel F. Brown, "The Charge of the Heavy Artillery," The Maine Bugle, Campaign I, Call I (January, 1894), 4-8.

learned how to fight. On the morning of the eighteenth of June seventy-five men of Co. I answered "Here" at roll call. There were one hundred and fifty at Spottsylvania. Just one-half was gone. I was the second man on the right of the company in the front rank, and next but one to the regimental colors. Of the original eight who formed the first two files on the right, two were dead and three wounded, leaving but three in the ranks, but others had closed up to the right, and our front although shorter, was still solid. I think it must have been about three o'clock in the afternoon when we came out from our breastworks and began to advance . . . The whole corps was to charge in mass, we to lead; and then came the getting ready. Knapsacks, haversacks and blankets were thrown off, in fact everything that would lighten our load; messages were delivered to be sent home, in case anything happened, and good byes were said. I can call to mind how I stood there leaning upon my musket, looking on . . . At last we heard from our colonel, "Attention, First Maine Heavy Artillery -- Forward, Guide Right, March!" As we scrambled up out of the road, what a sight was before us: about ten or fifteen hundred yards away, across an open field having a little rise and covered with old corn stubble, were the rebel works, bristling with artillery, still as death, awaiting our onslaught. . . . Then came the word, "Forward, Double Quick, Charge," and with a wild cheer which seemed to me more like the bitter cry wrung out in a death agony, we sprang forward. I saw the works plainly before me. I saw the blinding flash of red flame run along the crest of those works and heard the deafening crash as the awful work began; then the air seemed filled with all the sounds it was possible for it to contain, the hiss of the deadly minie, the scream of the shell, the crackle, crash and roar of every conceivable missile, and through it all that red blaze along the crest of that work which we must cross, as we, with bowed heads, breasted that storm. . . . History says that Gen. Birney massed the Second Corps and made a desperate charge that day. So he did, but it was the First Maine Heavy Artillery that made the charge alone. The rest of the corps never crossed the sunken road. I went up the road towards the left to where the colonel was, just as Gen. Birney rode up, and heard him say, "Col. Chaplin, where are your men?" and I shall never forget his answer: "There they are, out on that field where your tried veterans dared not go. Here, you can take my sword; I have no use for it now;" and the old hero sat down in the road and cried like a child. Just as night began to close in, the adjutant came along and told us to get together and call the roll. We did. Company I got together; we had gone in with seventy-five men; six privates had come out. There was no roll call in that company that night; one of our number wrote the names on a piece of paper and with tears running down his cheeks handed it to the adjutant; that was all. Out of the nine hundred men of the regiment about seven hundred had fallen. Late that night Lieut. Sam Oakes came to us. He had been knocked senseless on the field, but at night revived and crawled off. How we hugged him and cried

over him! His coming saved our company from being wiped out, but the bruises he got that day cost him his life within one short year. Our colonel was brokenhearted over his loss and threw his life away at Deep Bottom soon after. He seemed not to care to live after his regiment was gone.

Such was the charge of the First Maine Heavy Artillery on the eighteenth day of June, 1864, before Petersburg. . . . I had a bullet through my cap, cutting off a lock of hair close to the skin, one took off the heel of my shoe, two went through my canteen, one cut the bayonet scabbard in two, and one went through the left sleeve of my blouse leaving a small splinter in the arm, where it is yet. I have never attempted to talk about that charge; I cannot, neither can I describe it; it is beyond description; but I can see it yet, and suppose I always shall.

19. The Battle of Shiloh had taken place nearly sixty years before.

A Union veteran recalled a part of it:¹⁹

✓The veteran explains how the song "The Girl I Left Behind Me" always causes him to remember his part in the Battle of Shiloh because the regimental bands were playing it then.✓

20. To a friend, Oliver Wendell Holmes began a letter with:²⁰

✓Holmes tell a friend that the day of his letter to him is the anniversary of the day he was wounded at Ball's Bluff. He recalls that he had contemplated taking laudanum if the pain became unbearable, but that the next day he resolved to live.✓

21. Oliver Wendell Holmes to Harold Laski:²¹

✓Holmes expresses a desire to return to Ball's Bluff where he had fought over 65 years ago but doubts if he will ever get there.✓

22. In May, 1865, the armies of Grant and Sherman passed in Grand Review in Washington, D. C. Henry Howard Brownell described the event in fifty-

seven stanzas of verse, a few of which follow:²²

¹⁹Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 62.

²⁰Mark DeWolfe Howe, ed., Holmes-Pollack Letters (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1941), I, 64.

²¹Mark DeWolfe Howe, ed., Holmes-Laski Letters (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1953), II, 949.

²²Harper's Pictorial History, 789.

So, from the fields they win,
 Our men are marching home-
 A million are marching home!
 To the cannon's thundering din,
 And banners on mast and dome;
 And the ships come sailing in
 With all their ensigns dight,
 As erst for a great sea-fight.

Let every color fly,
 Every pennon flaunt in pride;
 Wave, Starry Flag, on high!
 Float in the sunny sky,
 Stream o'er the stormy tide!
 For every stripe of stainless hue,
 And every star in the field of blue,
 Ten thousand of the brave and true
 Have laid them down and died.

And in all our pride to-day
 We think, with a tender pain,
 Of those so faraway
 They will not come home again. . . .

March on, your last brave mile!
 Salute him, Star and Lance!
 Form around him, rank and file,
 And look on the kind, rough face;
 But the quaint and homely smile
 Has a glory and a grace
 It never had known erewhile-
 Never, in time and space.

Close round him, hearts of pride!
 Press near him, side by side-
 Our Father is not alone!
 For the Holy Right ye died,
 And Christ, the Crucified,
 Waits to welcome his own.

23. Carlton McCarthy, a Confederate veteran, recalled a scene of camp life:²³

The soldier may forget the long, weary march, with its dust, heat, and thirst, and he may forget the horrors and blood of the battlefield, or he may recall them sadly, as he thinks of the loved dead; but the cheerful, happy scenes of the camp-fire he will never forget. How willingly he closes his eyes to the pre-

²³ Carlton McCarthy, Detailed Minutiae, 194.

sent to dream of those happy, careless days and nights! Around the fire crystallize the memories of the soldier's life. It was his home, his place of rest, where he met with good companionship. Who kindled the fire? Nobody had matches, there was no fire in sight, and yet scarcely was the camp determined when the bright blaze of the camp-fire was seen. He was a shadowy fellow who kindled the fire. Nobody knows who he was; but no matter how wet the leaves, how soggy the twigs, no matter if there was no fire in a mile of the camp, that fellow could start one. Some men might get down on hands and knees, and blow it and fan it, rear and charge, and fume and fret, and yet "she wouldn't burn." But this fellow would come, kick it all around, scatter it, rake it together again, shake it up a little, and oh, how it burned! The little flames would bite the twigs and snap at the branches, embrace the logs, and leap and dance and laugh, at the touch of the master's hand, and soon lay at his feet a bed of glowing coals.

24. From the Maine Bugle of January, 1894:²⁴

AN OLD BLUE CAP

By Kendall Pollard of Co. K.

There's a cap in the closet, old tattered and blue,
Of very slight value it may be to you;
But a crown, jewel-studded, could not buy it to-day,
With its letters of honor, brave "Company K."

Bright eyes have looked calmly its visor beneath,
O'er the mark of the reaper, grim harvester death.
Let the muster roll meagre so mournfully say
How foremost in danger was "Company K."

Who faltered or shivered? Who shunned battle stroke?
Whose fire was uncertain? Whose battle-line broke?
Go ask it of history, years from to-day
And the record shall tell you, not "Company K."

Though my darling is sleeping to-day with the dead
and daisies and clover bloom over his head,
I smile through my tears as I lay it away,
That battle-worn cap lettered "Company K."

²⁴Kendall Pollard (of Co. K), "An Old Blue Cap," The Maine Bugle, Campaign I, Call I, (January, 1894), 19.

25. Chelsea, Massachusetts, Memorial Day, 1873. Major William Hodgkins spoke at the Theodore Winthrop Encampment, Post 35, Grand Army of the Republic:²⁵

As we have marched these streets have we not been conscious of an unseen presence? Cannot we recall some comrade dear, who has drank with us from the same canteen, and with whom we have shared our last morsel of bread, by whose side we have marched in mud or dust or heat, whose cares and griefs and joys were ours? Cannot we remember one with whom we have sat long at the blazing camp-fire, and talked of far-off home, and then, after a doubtful day and in promise of a more doubtful morrow, lay down to share the blanket in his last bivouac on earth? Ah, yes! many here can recall one such friend! We remember, too, the waking from that bivouac, the stern orders the returning daylight brought, the forming for attack, the slow advance, the quick, rattling fire of the skirmishers, and then the dust and din and fury of the strife, the final charge, the shock, the victory! We weep for our comrade, but he has fallen! We search for him among the wounded, mangled forms, and find him gently breathing out his life. We take his nerveless hand and look into his fast glazing eyes. He is going home! His last battle has been fought. The order for his discharge has come! No more weary marches! No more fruitless charges! No more hunger and cold and midnight watching! -- all that is done, We bow to catch his dying whisper, "Take care of my wife and child," and his heroic soul has passed on to join the unseen armies of the skies! Beneath some spreading tree we make his humble grave. We rudely carve his name upon the tree, and before high Heaven we vow to do for his dear ones what we would have our comrades do for us.

26. Worcester, Massachusetts. January 20, 1869. General A. B. R. Sprague, Grand Commander, Department of Massachusetts, Grand Army of the Republic spoke at the Department's annual meeting:²⁶

In the name of outraged humanity; by the untold sufferings endured by our comrades, faithful even unto death, in the prison-pens at Andersonville, at Salisbury, at Belle Isle, and other

²⁵Major William H. Hodgkins, Address Delivered Before Theodore Winthrop Encampment, Post 35, G. A. R. (Rockwell and Churchill, Boston, 1873), 16.

²⁶General A. B. R. Sprague, Address to Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Department G. A. R. (B. F. Bennett & Co., Stationers, Boston, 1869), 11.

places of torment; in the name of more than three hundred thousand dead, the flower of the Republic, victims of a rebellion which sought to overthrow the best government ever established on earth, since the morning stars sang together; we enter our solemn protest against the admission to equal rights and privileges of traitors, who welcomed, with bloody hands, our comrades "to hospitable graves," who inhumanly, by starvation and torture, drove out from its clayey tenement the patriot soul they could not conquer, and who have forfeited their lives by every principle of equity and justice. Shall we extend the olive branch to such as these, while we deny the right of citizenship to those who were "faithful among the faithless found?"

27. Memorial Day, 1870. Rev. Martin Howard spoke in Wilbraham, Mass.:²⁷

The object of this day's gathering is not to recount the scenes of our civil conflict, or open anew the wounds which we fondly and hopefully trust are being healed. We have no old grudges or enmities to review. We have no desire to feed any flame of passion, or widen any gulf which yearns between once defiant sections; for, though we cannot forget the prisons-pens and the hard, cruel fare which grimly greeted our sons, and brothers, and neighbors, as they met the vicissitudes of war, we would strive to forget the past with all its bloodshed, its horrors, and its crimes, in the welcome return of prosperity and peace.

But here, and all over our land, there are graves where lie sleeping many a fond hope. Husbands and sons went forth in all the flow of health and beauty, only to return pale, cold, lifeless, or, never returning, were laid away in the trenches with the promiscuous dead.

"The bugle's wild and warlike blast shall muster them
no more
An army now might thunder past, and they not heed its
roar,
The starry flag 'neath which they fought in many a
bloody day,
From their old graves shall rouse them not, for they
have passed away."

And still they remain in the fond memories which this day calls to mind. And so in this bright spring-time, when all nature is fragrant and beautiful, we make our annual pilgrimage to their quiet resting-places; recall the service they rendered for us and for their country, and cover their graves with garlands of bright flowers. And when in coming years we tell our children and children's children of a nation's struggles and a nation's triumph, we will speak their names, and teach those who shall come after us to revere their memory.

²⁷Rev. Martin S. Howard, "Unrecorded Heroism", An Address Delivered on Memorial Day, May 30, 1870, in Wilbraham, Mass., 3.

28. In 1888 Carlton McCarthy, a Confederate veteran, wrote:²⁸

The Confederate soldier was a venerable old man, a youth, a child, a preacher, a farmer, merchant, student, statesman, orator, father, brother, husband, son, -- the wonder of the world, the terror of his foes!

If the peace of this country can only be preserved by forgetting the Confederate soldier's deeds and his claims upon the South, the blessing is too dearly bought. We have sworn to be grateful to him. Dying, his head pillowed on the bosom of his mother, Virginia, he heard that his name would be honored.

When we fill up, hurriedly, the bloody chasm opened by war, we should be careful that we do not bury therein many noble deeds, some tender memories, some grand examples, and some hearty promises washed with tears.

29. From the 1873 Memorial Day Address of Major William H. Hodgkins, Grand Army of the Republic:²⁹

Our heartsswell with unwonted emotion as we recall the hour, twelve years ago, when the first dred sound of war was heard throughout the land, and the call went forth for men to arm and defend the Capital of the Nation. That cry awoke response in every loyal heart. "From every valley in our northern land, from every cabin by the pleasant mountain side, from the ships at our wharves, from the tent of the hunter on our western-most prairies, from the living minds of the living millions of American freemen the shout went up like the sound of many waters -- The Union, it must be preserved!"

30. To Lewis Einstein from Oliver Wendell Holmes:³⁰

[Holmes tells of his plans to visit Arlington on the following day -- to visit the family grave and also a grave for approximately two or three thousand soldiers from the Civil War.]

31. A different generation was preparing to march against Spain in 1898.

²⁸ Carlton McCarthy, Detailed Minutiae, 8.

²⁹ Major William H. Hodgkins, Address, 4.

³⁰ James Bishop Peabody, ed., The Holmes-Einstein Letters (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., New York, 1964), 325.

Oliver Wendell Holmes reflected:³¹

He philosophized that it must be easier to campaign later in life, because to die as a young soldier is "to miss the point of being." Whereas, when older, it could mean just to die a little earlier but to have had the opportunity to experience life.

32. A Civil War veteran wrote of leave-taking:³²

Stillwell recounts how his experience as a father sending his son off to the Spanish-American War helped him understand better than ever before how his father must have felt when he bid goodbye to him as he left for the Civil War.

33. A modern comment:³³

Realism may be less exciting than romance, but time has a trick of making it more enduring and endurable.

³¹ Mark DeWolfe Howe, Holmes-Pollack Letters, I, 86.

³² Leander Stillwell, The Story of a Common Soldier, 177.

³³ Cecil D. Eby, Jr., ed., A Virginia Yankee, XII.

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92

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